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MIDDLE EAST

THE VOICE OF THE CHANNEL

299 | SEPTEMBER 2022

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HIGHLIGHTS:

VAD Technologies
Barco
Micro Focus

THE WINNING FORMULA

LOUBNA IMENCHAL, HEAD OF ENTERPRISE BUSINESS AT LOGITECH AMECA, TELLS ANITA JOSEPH IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WHY THE CHANNEL ECOSYSTEM IS VITAL FOR THE COMPANY'S SUCCESS AND HOW LOGITECH IS EQUIPPING ITS PARTNERS TO COPE WITH THE RAPIDLY CHANGING TECHNOLOGY LANDSCAPE.

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WINNER TAKES IT ALL

What does it take to win in today's highly competitive market? How does a winner stand out from the rest? What's the secret of their success? These questions continue to be asked and discussed year-to-year, day-to-day, minute to minute-in fact, their answers keep changing with the changing times.

In this issue of your favourite magazine, we feature the winners. And we've one standing tall-who, with her astuteness, acumen and foresightedness, has been steadily steering her company to success against all odds: Loubna Imenchal of Logitech, who's changing the rules and setting new benchmarks for the channel industry every day. Read our special cover story to discover how Logitech has been growing and expanding steadily in her able hands.

Our Interview of the Month features another shining star: Mario Veljovic of VAD Technologies, who is redefining the distribution industry with his bold moves and extensive knowledge. From Aruba, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company, we have Ahmed El Sayed, Regional Channel Manager – Middle East, Saudi and South Africa, who explains how innovating at the right time can and will, invariably lead to success.

Danish Siddiqui of Raqmiyat provides a unique perspective into digital banking and his company's extensive digital banking portfolio. Not to be left out is Ranjith Kaippada, Managing Director at Cloud Box Technologies, who discusses his company's presence in the region and the cutting-edge technology & service solutions they have adopted. We've also gone all out to bring you an exclusive opinion piece from our technology panelist, Osama Qadan, on how the COVID era has presented a new environment for System Integrators. But we're not done yet. Ekta Puthran of Barco discusses how a flexible office environment can better align employee needs and business goals-a must in today's changing work and business landscape.

Guaranteed, this issue of Reseller Middle East will inspire, motivate and encourage. It will unravel success formulas, business insights and channel management strategies. So, what are you waiting for? Happy Reading!

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MAJID AL FUTTAIM RETAIL FORMS STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH MICROSOFT TO TRANSFORM ITS FINANCE OPERATIONS



Rahul Bhandari

Microsoft has announced that Majid Al Futtaim Retail – operator of the Carrefour retail brand across 16 countries in the Middle East, Africa and Asia – has transformed its financial planning and analysis (FP&A) capabilities through the power of the trusted, intelligent, versatile Microsoft Azure Data Platform. Majid Al Futtaim Retail's finance team leveraged Azure Analytics Platform to fully automate financial and operational

reporting and create a single source of truth for decision-makers.

Through Azure Synapse and PowerBI, Majid Al Futtaim Retail was able to fully automate its financial and operational reporting, eliminating human intervention. The company now intends to incorporate Microsoft Azure Machine Learning into its technology mix, to drive AI use cases within its finance function.

“Our aim was to have the finance function reinvent itself and create a holistic information ecosystem that serves all our processes and people,” said Rahul Bhandari, Chief Financial Officer at Majid Al Futtaim Retail. “We were able to accelerate the digitisation of our performance data management, and the results speak for itself. Our automated reporting and analysis are now available on the go and allow faster access to actionable intelligence. We have been able to unify our KPIs and consolidate data financial, commercial, operational and industrial data points to give us holistic views of our business.”

KODAK ALARIS APPOINTS NEW MANAGING DIRECTOR IN EMEA



Naji Kazak

Kodak Alaris has named Naji Kazak as Managing Director for the EMEA (Europe, Middle East, India, and Africa) region. He is an exceptional leader, with deep knowledge and expertise that will help deliver continued growth and expansion within the region.

In his new role, Kazak will be responsible for Kodak Alaris' go-to-market strategy and sales performance in the EMEA markets, reporting into Cassio Vaquero, Vice President of Global Sales. He has a strong track record in driving sales success, having held a number of key posts within the business, most recently as General Manager - Middle East, Africa, Turkey, and Russia (METAR).

“I am incredibly pleased to welcome Naji to the EMEA leadership team,” said Don Lofstrom, President & General Manager at Kodak Alaris. “As we continue on our growth trajectory across the region, his experience will be invaluable in helping shape the future of how we conduct business through our EMEA operations and continue to serve our customers with unmatched responsiveness, technical accuracy, and professionalism.”

JEDOX LAUDED AS LEADER IN CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Jedox, an award-winning provider of Enterprise Performance Management (EPM) solutions for Financial Planning and Analysis (FP&A), has been named an Overall Leader for Customer Experience and Vendor Credibility in the 2022 Wisdom of Crowds Enterprise Performance Management Market Study by independent analyst Dresner Advisory Services.

The 2022 Wisdom of Crowds Enterprise Performance Management (EPM) Market Study analyses current user perceptions, intentions, and realities associated with EPM and offers detailed vendor performance ratings.

In the 2022 study, Jedox is named an Overall Leader in the Customer Experience Model, which considers real-world experience of customers working with EPM products. Jedox is also a Leader in the Vendor Credibility Model, which considers how customers “feel” about their vendor, their confidence in Jedox and their perceived value for price paid. Jedox is also named best-in-class for criteria related to experience with Jedox sales teams such as their understanding of customer business needs and post-sale follow-up.

“We appreciate being recognised as an Overall Leader in Customer Experience and Vendor Credibility and we value the insights from independent analysts who provide thorough perspectives on enterprise performance management and planning solutions”, said Dr. Rolf Gegenmantel, Chief Product Officer at Jedox. “This further highlights the value Jedox provides to organisations beyond the sales process”, he added.



Dr. Rolf Gegenmantel

PROVEN CONSULT & SOLUTION TO SHOWCASE EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AT FUTURE TECH EXPO & SUMMIT OMAN



Vishal Manchanda

PROVEN Consult, a leading automation technology firm in the GCC region, and PROVEN Solution, a state-of-the-art venture by PROVEN Arabia offering a range of Artificial Intelligence (AI) apps powered through cutting-edge robotic products, announced their participation at the second edition of Oman's Future Tech Expo & Summit, the country's leading B2B and B2G technology event taking place from the 12th to the 13th of September.

PROVEN Consult will be showcasing its latest innovations such as its Robotic Process Automation (RPA) solutions centered around key technologies such as Process Mining, Machine Learning, Advanced Analytics, and Intelligent Automation. PROVEN Solution will highlight its Virtual Reality (VR) solutions for healthcare, construction, and real-

estate through live and interactive demonstrations.

"Emerging technologies are fast becoming the cornerstone for a country's digital progression and Oman is being recognised as a forerunner in the region's digital revolution. We are pleased to participate in Future Tech, which will bring industry leaders and experts under one platform and look forward to demonstrating the power of our innovative solutions to visitors at the event. Our aim is to enable organisations tackle digital transformation challenges through our unique customised solutions. We look forward to meeting our customers and demonstrating how our solutions will support their digital transformation initiatives," said Vishal Manchanda, Regional Manager at Proven Consult.

INFOR TO SHOWCASE CUSTOMER CLOUD EXPERIENCE AND INNOVATION AT GITEX 2022

Infor, the industry cloud company, is set to demonstrate the power of its industry-specific cloud software solutions to help manufacturing and distribution customers in the Middle East automate and simplify complex systems and prepare for the future, at GITEX 2022.

Infor will highlight its industry expertise and the ability of its smart, pre-configured cloud solutions, which feature built in industry functionality, to enable customers to simplify complexity, transform business processes, accelerate time to value, and put their end users at the center of the experience.

Infor's top regional executives, software engineers and sales executives, — led by Kerry Koutsikos, Vice-President and General Manager for Middle East & Africa, and Khaled AlShami, vice president of solution consulting — will be available to provide demonstrations, discuss market solutions, and answer any questions about Infor's solutions.

"We're excited to meet with customers, partners and new prospects at GITEX to demonstrate end-to-end transformation that organisations can achieve with Infor's industry-specific cloud solutions," Koutsikos said. "Using our software, organisations in manufacturing and distribution can transform the way they manage their supply chains, business processes, assets, goods and services, and their people — all in one integrated, intuitive solution."



Kerry Koutsikos

VASION TO BRING PRINTERLOGIC AND SERVERLESS PRINTING TO GITEX GLOBAL 2022

PrinterLogic, the world leader in serverless printing infrastructure, has announced its participation at GITEX Global 2022, to help organisations eliminate print servers with the company's next generation cloud-native print management solution, and eliminate the PrintNightmare security vulnerability. The company is keen to meet with channel partners at the event with the intention of building local partnerships and increasing market coverage.

Speaking about the company's participation, Simon Hill, Managing Director for EMEA and APAC at Vasion said, "Over the past couple of years, we have witnessed companies embarking on their digital transformation journeys and the transition to the Cloud has been one of the integral parts of their digitisation process. Cloud-based solutions have made tremendous strides, driven by factors like business expansion imperatives, the remote work scenario as a result of Covid-19, smart city projects, and governmental initiatives. According to predictions from Gartner, global spending on cloud services is expected to reach over \$482 billion in 2022, up from \$314 billion in 2020. Against this scenario, we have seen an increased interest and uptake of the PrinterLogic solution that helps organisations move their printing infrastructure to the cloud and improve their print security."



Simon Hill

IMMENSA APPOINTS CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Immensa, the global leader in developing digital manufacturing solutions in the energy sector, announced the appointment of Sary Diab as a Chief Operating Officer and Partner. Diab joins Immensa's executive leadership team to help execute the company's strategic vision, accelerate its global growth, scale its global business operations, and lead the go-to-market teams.

Before taking up this role, Diab led the Middle Eastern efforts for Pall Corporation's Fluid Technologies and Asset Protection (FTAP) business unit, a multi-billion-dollar global leader in high-tech filtration, separation, and purification. He also built various



Sary Diab

businesses within the global corporate world, bringing over 20 years of experience at multinational corporations in the energy industry and proficiency in applying structure and business processes to drive sustainable growth and profitability.

Immensa today is the world's largest additive manufacturing and digital inventory solutions provider for the energy and industrial sectors with presence in UAE, KSA, Kuwait, Jordan, USA, and in Iraq soon. The company provides solutions that leverage advanced technologies such as additive manufacturing to take physical spare parts and dematerialise them into the digital world.

PUTTING THE CUSTOMER FIRST

Toufic Derbass, MEA Managing Director at Micro Focus, on how the company's cutting-edge Service Management Automation X (SMAx) platform leverages AI to provide the best experience to customers as they adapt to a digitally transforming business ecosystem.

What is Micro Focus's approach towards Enterprise Service Management (ESM) and the evolution of the service desk?

Today, companies of all sizes are focusing on innovation by not only adopting new technologies, but also by rethinking how they've traditionally approached delivery of goods and services to

their customers and employees. Therefore, it isn't surprising that one of the top priorities of CIOs, based on multiple surveys, is to "delight" the customer and employees, that consume IT services. On the same list of CIOs priorities, we can also always find service management across the entire enterprise. CIOs must improve, support and deliver services in ways that transform their business. So, we speak here not about a commoditised service desk but



OUR CUSTOMERS REPORT THAT THEY WERE ABLE TO EXPAND THE INFLUENCE OF ENTERPRISE FOOTPRINT WITH MICRO FOCUS SMAx BECAUSE OF ITS ENTIRELY CODELESS PLATFORM.



about transformational service management, and this is what Enterprise Service Management is about.

In this context— three main trends in service management that can help CIOs succeed at their objectives are:

- Focusing on enterprise services, just not IT services.
- Delivering better, more immersive IT experiences to delight everyone.
- Utilising AI & automation to improve service delivery and experiences.

These are the three guiding principles for us at Micro Focus when designing our service management platform and the content.

What are the essential capabilities that are mandatory in an ESM platform?

A modern and effective ESM platform must be equipped with modular content. For example, our platform is SMAX, which stands for Service Management Automation X. It comes with content including applications for ITSM (implementing the best practices from ITIL v4), non-IT service management like HR support request management, IT asset management, and hybrid cloud management. The platform has an embedded foundation consisting of discovery, CMDB and automation and orchestration software.

An ESM platform should deliver the following values:

- Superior service experience by powering self-service with AI, extending service desk reach to become an enterprise-wide service desk, and intelligent collaboration.
- Optimised IT productivity by configuring without code, fulfilling requests faster with the help of AI, and automating anything, including cloud service provisioning.

- Cost control and raised resiliency by removing unpredictable costs, driving successful changes, and governing IT assets
- Deployment flexibility: on-premise, cloud and SaaS, to be aligned to the customer cloud strategy.


You want to help your employees get back to work faster, and here AI-based capabilities help, such as search, ticket creation and conversational virtual agents. Then again, you'd want to transform your service management into a fast and flexible operation through codeless workflows, enterprise-wide automation, and fulfilling requests faster with AI. But there's more. You should be able to connect your service management workflows with powerful orchestration. From our single platform, you can provision hybrid cloud services. Even difficult to automate manual processes can be handled by RPA robots that mimic screen-based human actions.

How are Micro Focus customers leveraging and benefiting from Micro Focus SMAX?

We have customers ranging from Small, Medium and Enterprises level, using our services. What's common for all of them is the time to value by adopting our codeless way of working, the embedded AI-powered automation, superior user

experience, and the deployment flexibility from on-premises, cloud, or SaaS, to we help them improve their maturity and be aligned to their cloud strategy.

Without exception, our customers report that they were able to increase the usage of the service desk and the self-service portal. At the same time, the volume of tickets decreased. Our customers also report that they were able to expand the influence of enterprise footprint with Micro Focus SMAX because of its entirely codeless platform. Many customers developed codeless applications for different use cases and automated processes in HR, payroll, facilities and other business units. This helped digitise the "back offices".

Our SaaS customers appreciate the fact that they are always up-to-date with the latest release and that with the basic license they get 50 license units of Universal Discovery and two Operations Orchestration (OO) workflows. The simple and transparent licensing without any hidden costs is also something all of our customers love about Micro Focus SMAX. They get the most of enterprise service management capabilities with basic SMAX licence, such as all ITSM workflows, native CMDB and studio for configuring codeless workflows, HR service management content with 35 HR-specific workflows, mobile application for employees and field support engineers. 



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A STATS-BASED APPROACH TO HYBRID WORK IN THE FINANCIAL SECTOR

A flexible office environment can better align employee needs and business goals, says Ekta Puthran, MEA Lead – Collaboration, Barco.

Most employees in the UAE want a hybrid or full-time remote work arrangement. It is a sentiment that is echoed by people working across industries, including the local finance and banking sectors. But as businesses began contemplating return to office plans earlier this summer, the financial and banking sector seemed to be reverting to old habits and rallying for in-office presence.

Bolstered by the COVID-19 pandemic and a tight labour market, worker demands for more flexibility have only increased in recent months - even with the world reopening again. Standard Chartered showed foresight and committed to continue to offer permanent flexible work for its staff from as early as January 2021. The initiative started with 9 of its primary markets, including the UAE.

The bank also collaborated with flexible workspace services provider IWG so employees worldwide can work

from any of IWG's 3,500 locations internationally. HSBC has also formally certified hybrid working with the ambition of reducing office space by 40%. On the flip side, Barclays announced that it was looking to ramp up employees' return to its London and New York offices.

Clearly, only a handful of organisations within the financial sector are realising the risks of a 'one size fits all' work approach, as many workers want to retain the flexibility they had during the pandemic. Nevertheless, while the workforce may have changed, the office is still equipped for the old way of working. Recent changes are shaping a new paradigm, and businesses across the financial sector must keep up to meet employee expectations.

Office Revamp: A Much-Needed Initiative

Anyone who has entered an office since early 2020 would likely have experienced the eerie silence of the rows of empty desks and cubicles.

Memories of battling colleagues for coveted meeting spaces and groups huddling around a single laptop are probably still fresh.

From the advent of remote working, many of us have experienced significant increases in productivity. However, the quality of our interactions has dramatically fallen. As a result, work meetings have regularly failed to meet expectations. A recent study by Barco showed a 25-point decline between 2020 and 2021 on its meeting barometer. The findings further indicated that 57% of white-collar workers considered meeting rooms as the most useful spaces in a post-pandemic world. Hence, employees no longer view the office as simply a place to work. Rather, they think of it as an encouraging space for more collaboration.

In this scenario, the opportunity to realign office spaces may come as a system shock to an industry long accustomed to the traditional "cubicle rows" layout. Nevertheless, as professionals now covet meeting



CLEARLY, ONLY A HANDFUL OF ORGANISATIONS WITHIN THE FINANCIAL SECTOR ARE REALISING THE RISKS OF A 'ONE SIZE FITS ALL' WORK APPROACH.

spaces, they will be a functional must-have. Currently, 50% of workers visit offices to host meeting calls in a more professional setting, indicating that the desire for efficient meetings will be the real drive to an office return. Therefore, accommodating these new behaviours should be a priority for the financial and banking sector.

Tapping Into Hybrid Technology

Improved office layout isn't the only change needed for a hybrid environment. There's a great opportunity for businesses to upgrade outdated or inefficient collaboration technologies.

Like other industries, financial sector employees have embraced the laptop as the main device to work, collaborate, and host meetings, fuelling the surge in preference for Bring Your Own Meeting solutions (BYOM). Barco's research indicates that 77% of respondents cannot imagine working without their laptop and have enjoyed sharing their screen and content with


just a simple click. With meetings now controlled via the user's laptop, businesses must invest in solutions that continue this seamless connectivity. To that end, agnostic solutions like Barco's ClickShare allow workers to connect and collaborate irrespective of meeting platform (Webex by Cisco, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.).

Additionally, the return to offices is unlikely to be instant or unanimous. Despite calls from certain corners of the finance and banking sector to do so, many employees will continue to work from home periodically or permanently. Therefore, companies should ensure that their meeting rooms are well equipped for hybrid meetings. ClickShare and similar solutions would require implementation alongside updated Audio-Visual equipment to make collaboration easier.

All-Round Security

While security is important in any industry, the highly sensitive and data-driven nature of financial work makes it critical for success. Early in the pandemic, hijacked conferencing platforms and cyber-attacks by hackers/pranksters became a regular occurrence. With meetings likely to continue in a hybrid fashion, it is essential that any future tech invested in is secure. Particularly with agnostic solutions that connect the user's laptop to meeting room equipment, there must be strong security considerations. For starters, the sector should prioritise investing in solutions that incorporate security directly into the product's design.

Another key responsibility comes from within the company via the education of employees. Ensuring that workers are well aware of prevalent dangers and the necessary precautions to be taken when using a new device is paramount.

Like others, the financial sector is still learning to shape a future of work that accommodates its employees' needs and preferences. As the industry begins to embrace hybrid work, it creates plenty of opportunities to eliminate the inefficiencies of the pre-pandemic world, thereby reimagining everything from work technology to office spaces. 

KASPERSKY REPORTS 52% DECREASE IN ATTACKS AGAINST REMOTE DESKTOP PROTOCOLS IN ME IN Q2 2022

According to Kaspersky telemetry, the number of brute force attacks against Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP) in the Middle East has significantly decreased in Q2 2022 by 52% compared to the previous quarter. This downward trajectory could be a result of several reasons. This could be due to the RDP vulnerabilities exposed in the first quarter of the year, due to the workforce switching from remote to hybrid work, or due to organisations adopting secure RDP configurations for their remote employees, making it then a less attractive target.

RDP is a popular protocol used by employees to connect to corporate resources, servers and networks remotely. Attacks against RDP are considered some of the most common tactics used by cybercriminals to explore security vulnerabilities and target computers within an organisation's network. By exploiting insecure or incorrectly configured RDP settings, cybercriminals can log into the system without the victim's permissions and install ransomware or steal sensitive data.

In the first quarter of 2022, the detections in the Middle East were high at 16,006,243, as compared to the detections in the second quarter which stood at 7,690,416. Despite the decrease, RDP attacks should still be a concern for organisations as they continue to embrace the new reality of hybrid work. According to a recent report by Kaspersky, the financial loss due to cyberattacks averaged \$686K in the region.

In terms of countries, Egypt saw the highest number of detections




Maher Yamout

in the second quarter of 2022 at 2,744,444, followed by the United Arab Emirates at 2,177,380 detections and Saudi Arabia at 2,012,534 detections – this represented a decrease from the previous quarter by 55%, 39% and 53% respectively.

“Remote working comes with security risks and threats and hybrid working is no exception. The fact that employees can access company network anytime from anywhere across devices is a trend to be adopted and adapted to with caution. No doubt companies are trying hard to ensure employees are well-connected to work more collaboratively, and have access to data to meet business needs, but strong and strict security measures need to be place to avoid any slip-ups. Incorrect RDP setting, weak passwords, or use of public WI-FI can result in serious setbacks,” said **Maher Yamout, Senior Security Researcher at Kaspersky.**



RDP IS A POPULAR PROTOCOL USED BY EMPLOYEES TO CONNECT TO CORPORATE RESOURCES, SERVERS AND NETWORKS REMOTELY.

- To keep your company safe from brute force RDP attacks, Kaspersky experts recommend:
- Enable access to RDP through a corporate VPN only
- Enable the use of Network Level Authentication (NLA) when connecting remotely.
- If possible, enable multi-factor authentication
- Use corporate security solution empowered with network threat protection such as Kaspersky Endpoint Security for Business
- Organisations can use the Kaspersky Automated Security Awareness Platform, which builds concrete cyber-hygiene skills and practices. 



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DISRUPTING DISTRIBUTION

In an exclusive interview, Mario Veljovic, GM, VAD technologies, tells Anita Joseph how the company manages to maintain a robust growth trajectory in an increasingly competitive market.

In an era of disruptive technologies, how does VAD redefine value-added distribution?

VAD Technologies was established with a clear vision and mission to bring innovative and disruptive technologies and solutions to the markets of the Middle East and

beyond. To be successful in such a pioneering sector, your top priority is to develop a very strong relationship with your partner reseller network, which regards you as their trusted partner and advisor.

We take pride in the fact that the top System Integrators, service providers and resellers in the market work closely with us, and we are



EVERY VENDOR WE PLAN TO ENGAGE WITH UNDERGOES A THOROUGH EVALUATION PROCESS TO ENSURE THAT THE TECHNOLOGY MEETS A FEW IMPORTANT CRITERIA.



taking an active part in defining their future solution portfolio and go-to market. Similarly, we are proud to see our vendor-partner relationships grow year-on-year, and VAD Technologies being an integral part of their regional strategy.

How does VAD drive technology products & solutions among its channel partners?

Every vendor we plan to engage with undergoes a thorough evaluation process to ensure that the technology meets a few important criteria. These include scalability of business, market readiness, ability to execute in the region, complexity of the solution, and many more. Once the vendor is onboarded, our technical & product management teams get trained on the solution.

From here, we will start to select potential partners that have the right end customer reach in the market and the necessary expertise to successfully promote the solution. In dedicated seminars, we will excite the partner's sales teams about the vendor and its solution and building a joint go-to market plan, which includes a detailed end customer account mapping.

The VAD Technologies team will be there to guide, support and motivate the partner throughout the entire sales process. We will be there whether the partner needs support with demos, Proof of Concepts (POC), logistics, extended financing or even solution deployments, professional services or after sales support.

Tell us about your enterprise solutions portfolio.

Today, VAD Technologies' products & solutions portfolio comprises over 35 technology vendors that are carefully selected, and which can be categorised into 3 main solution stacks: High Performance Data Center, Information Technology Service Management (ITSM) and Physical Security & Computer Vision. All technologies we offer see a strong use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

and can be made available in the cloud. With this making us being able to deliver only future-proof solutions to our channel. The key focus is to ensure that the solutions our partner reseller network can offer their clients will achieve the optimal Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) and drive the fastest Return of Investment (ROI) possible, while not compromising on addressing the clients' most complex challenges to meet their digital transformation objectives.


How would you describe the regional distribution market?

The past few years has seen the regional distribution market further consolidating, and only distributors

that were able to successfully create new growth opportunities could maintain a profitable business and survive. Distributors found it increasingly difficult to strike a healthy balance between growth and profitability, especially due to shrinking margins with the established legacy vendors and increasing cost to better cover the entire region and support their reseller partners.

Having said this, the region is hungry for innovative and disruptive technologies and distributors who have prepared for this, like VAD Technologies, see the results and enjoy strong growth. In fact, many of the vendors we have been working with for years have now moved from being an emerging vendor into hyper growth mode: something which helps us to continuously reinvest our business and strategy.

What is VAD's plan for the region, going forward?

VAD Technologies has successfully completed the 2nd phase of its expansion plan this year and has now legal entities, offices and local teams in the United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Qatar. The 3rd phase will see us expanding into the State of Kuwait, Kingdom of Bahrain, and the Sultanate of Oman by potentially end of this year or latest, the beginning of 2023. Our objective is to be as close as possible to our partner reseller network in the entire Middle East and beyond. We already cater to Partners in Turkey, Africa and Levant and consider bring local resources to our network in these geographies during 2023, too. As we are focusing on enhancing our operations, we will not stop to scout innovative and disruptive technologies to ensure that our loyal reseller partner network will remain in position to offer the latest and greatest to their clients in all possible industry verticals. Hence, you will see that our technology vendor partnerships will grow further. 



THE KEY FOCUS IS TO ENSURE THAT THE SOLUTIONS OUR PARTNER RESELLER NETWORK CAN OFFER THEIR CLIENTS WILL ACHIEVE THE OPTIMAL TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP (TCO) AND DRIVE THE FASTEST RETURN OF INVESTMENT (ROI) POSSIBLE, WHILE NOT COMPROMISING TO ADDRESS THE CLIENTS' MOST COMPLEX CHALLENGES TO MEET THEIR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OBJECTIVES.

CLOUD BOX TECHNOLOGIES

ONE OF THE PREMIERE IT INFRASTRUCTURE SOLUTION PROVIDERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

WHO WE ARE

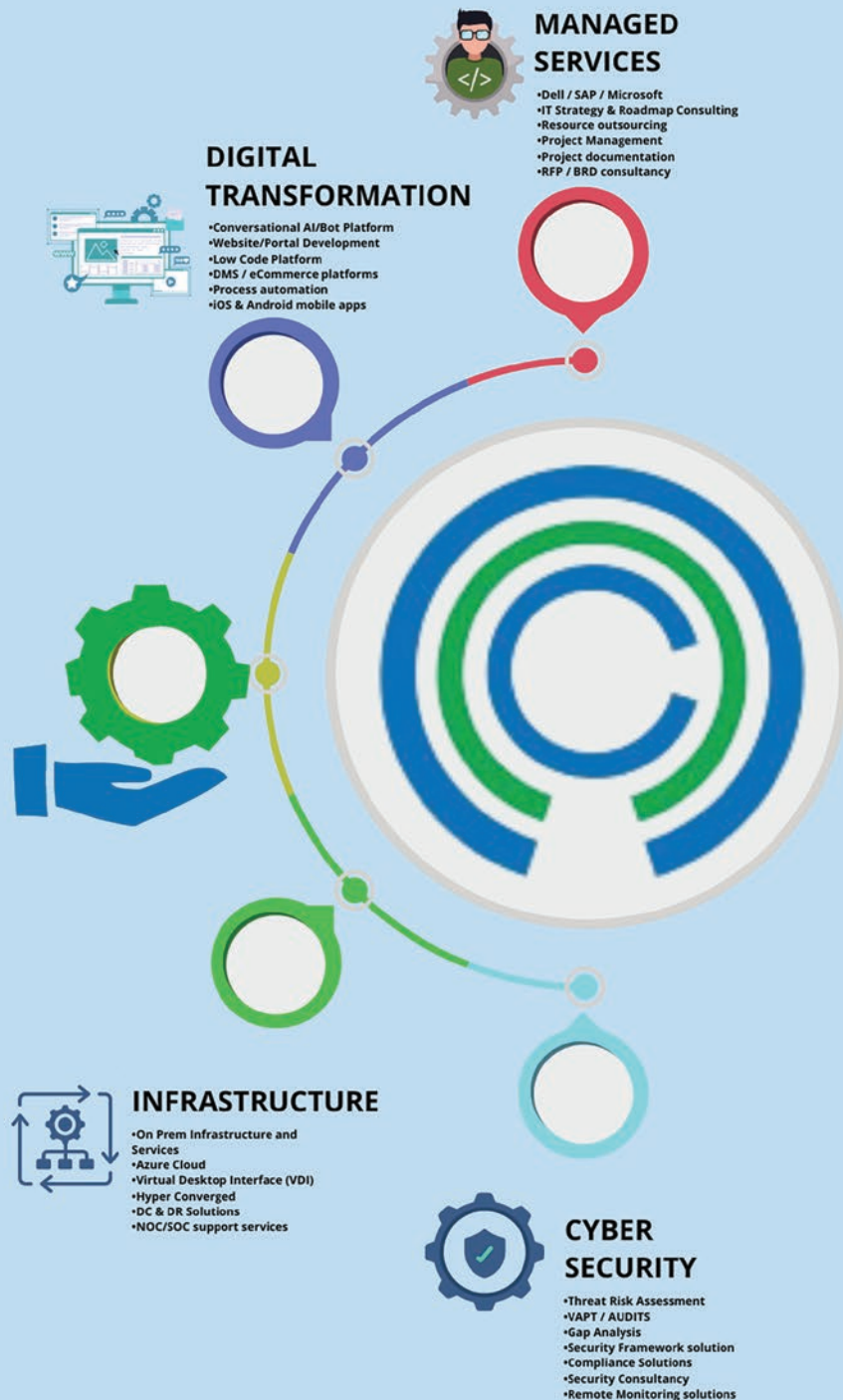
Empowering our clients

We are proud to be a UAE based ISO 9001 & 27001 certified organization headquartered in Dubai Sheikh Zayed Road with a passion for technology & Smart Solutions

Our values are derived from the Emirati culture with a vision to participate in the growth and development of the UAE

We have a highly experienced, innovative technical team with many years of experience in delivering projects ranging from simple to very complex.

Our experience has been gained through working with some of the largest global organizations in both the public and private sectors



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INNOVATING FOR SUCCESS

Ahmed El Sayed, Regional Channel Manager – Middle East, Saudi and South Africa at Aruba, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company, tells Anita Joseph how the company manages to deliver on customer expectations every single time.

What is Aruba's channel presence in the region like-particularly in the ME, KSA & Saudi Arabia?

We count our highly skilled employees who support customers and partners as our company's most valuable asset. We realise that partners are key to our success and as such, we have continued to build and develop a strong, technically proficient and capable channel ecosystem. It has been a top priority to expand our channel partners presence across all key markets and verticals in order to have the best possible regional footprint and carry the Aruba flag to our customers. The diversity of our channel capabilities are key to successfully delivering on customers' expectations of being true advisors and driving business outcomes, rather than just basic connectivity objectives. We have also made sure we expand our reach to new channel partners that play in the SD-WAN space, to leverage our EdgeConnect solutions and expand our market share.

What is the secret of Aruba's success across multiple verticals and what drives its growth?

Our solutions address the specific needs and imperatives of different industries and create value through transformed customer experiences and accelerated financial outcomes. Be it retail, education, financial services, healthcare or hospitality, Aruba enables amazing digital experiences from edge to cloud with a network that's secure, agile, and autonomous. Our core value remains "customer first, customer last". We are committed to each customer's success - co-creating solutions to solve their unique problems.

Because Aruba was born in the mobile, cloud, and IoT era of networking, this required us to think about connectivity and end-user experiences in a very different way — a secure, intelligent edge network. As an industry leader in secure Wi-Fi, we expanded our portfolio to include secure wired + wireless, as well as industry leading network management, and location services. Aruba ESP is the only architecture

that enables organisations to implement an end-to-end network comprising WLAN, switching, SD-WAN, and remote access, all protected by common Zero Trust and SASE security frameworks, built-in from the start. It also helps simplify IT operations and improve agility by integrating more workflows and advanced technology through single pane of glass network management and improves network service delivery and the resulting end-user experience through full-featured AIOps.

Tell us about Aruba's Managed Services strategy, particularly with reference to Cloud-as-a-Service?

Aruba ESP is designed to provide customers with flexibility and options to build their infrastructure in the way and with the timing that works best for them. HPE's vision is to become the leading Edge-to-Cloud Platform-as-a-Service company, and Aruba's ambition is to be the Edge Authority, leveraging Aruba's Edge Services Platform (ESP). As a strategic priority, and using this as a foundation, our mission is to grow



the Aruba Network-as-a-Service (NaaS) business together with our channel partners. We managed to create various models whereby our channel partners can deliver As-a-Service experience to our customers, while benefiting from developing customer loyalty and delivering QOS up to our customers' expectations. One of the three key ways is where the partner resells HPE GreenLake for Aruba. The second is where partners use their own brand, NOC and services and manage customer relationships. And lastly, a partner can leverage HPE Financial Services (HPEFS) offerings to augment Aruba-branded SaaS or partner-led NaaS. The good news is that we have Managed Services channel partners in most of the countries in Middle East that can deliver ESP as a service.




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RECOGNISED BY
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FI 6, SWITCHING,
SD-BRANCH, AND
A VISIONARY IN
DATA CENTER
NETWORKING.**

Can you brief our readers about a company success story?

Aruba has repeatedly been recognised by third party analysts as a leader in Wi-Fi 6, switching, SD-Branch, and a visionary in Data Center networking. The world's largest companies rely on us to provide a secure, AI-powered edge services platform that spans across campus, branch, data center, and remote working environments. Aruba has been at the forefront of innovation since its start, and has continued to make significant investments to deliver Aruba ESP (Edge Services Platform), the first platform that goes well beyond conventional network management to provide AI-powered operations, provisioning, orchestration, security, and location services from the cloud.

Combining over 18 years of proven wired and wireless network expertise with modeling telemetry data from over one million wired, wireless and SD-WAN devices, Aruba AI can identify anomalies and provide prescriptive recommendations that network administrators can trust. No other networking vendor has this level of AI expertise. Aruba as-a-service provides options for financial and consumption flexibility across hardware, software, and management operations. Flexible financing options include leasing, deferred payment, and buy-back programs for unlocking sunk costs. Consumption options include SaaS and NaaS solutions offered in simple pay-as-you-go subscriptions.

We are always customer first, customer last. We don't develop technology for technology's sake—everything we do starts and ends with our customers. We are unconventional and innovative. We've never been a traditional networking company. We're always questioning, pushing boundaries, and 5Gv charting new paths to success. We are the biggest small company. Over the years, we've treated our customers, employees, and suppliers like family while remaining nimble and ahead of market shifts.

And finally, we have proven success in driving outcomes for customers, for which we work hand-in-hand with partners. 

THE CUTTING EDGE

*Ranjith Kaippada,
Managing Director,
Cloud Box Technologies
on their presence in the
region and their cutting-
edge technology &
service solutions.*

Tell us about Cloud Box-its presence in the region -what are your areas of expertise in terms of IT solutions and services?

Partnering with best of breed vendors has enabled Cloud Box Technologies to be a trusted Systems Integrator to a diverse set of customers across different industries, including, healthcare, banking and finance, retail, manufacturing, etc. Additionally, the company has been recognised for the strong capabilities and experienced team that have been able to work with customers with tailor-made solutions to meet their diverse business objectives.

A five-year-old company, Cloud Box Technologies, has a set of experienced senior professionals, most having over 20 years of experience each. Within this short span of time the organisation has worked towards expanding its customer portfolio and has major accounts with very successful implementations including some milestone projects.

Masters in infrastructure, Cloud Box Technologies is keen on strengthening its Managed Detection

and Response (MDR) service along with a global vendor as a new service offering in the region. This comes at a time when security is a major focus where effective security solutions and services are being outsourced to specialist providers. With this new addition, Cloud Box Technologies is able to provide customers with effective security solutions that can deliver total protection of their IT infrastructure.

Additionally, Cloud Box Technologies is also focused on other services including security monitoring services through its inhouse NOC, round the clock protection with customised software solutions.

With digital transformation on fast track, what are some of the challenges you've been facing with regard to technology adoption?

An increasing number of organisations are moving towards their digital transformation goals and is the future of Cloud computing. However, this also poses challenges that organisations encounter. One of the biggest challenges is network security and compliance. Additionally, cost

optimisation with limited budgets can prove to be a burden especially at a time when business requirements are changing and implementing advanced technologies involves additional costs.

Cloud Box Technologies has attained Dell Platinum Partner status. What solutions are you offering in partnership with Dell?

Being a Dell partner gives the company a strong advantage to be able to offer a set of world class products to its customers. Cloud Box Technologies provides value added services and unique solutions that customers are looking for with the aim of achieving their digital transformational goals.

As a Platinum Partner of Dell, Cloud Box Technologies focuses on Dell EMC Next generation Data, Next Generation Data Protection solutions, as well as the advanced Dell EMC VxRail Hyperconverged Infrastructure solution.


How important is the Middle East region in terms of your solutions & service offerings?

The Middle East is the most dynamic region in the world. The scope for new and advanced technologies being implemented are accelerated with the regions' governments adopting high levels of digital transformation and is also widely accepted across industries. This gives Cloud Box Technologies

huge confidence to provide innovative solutions that enables them to implement a range of technology needs along with some of the best-of-breed vendors that the company partners with. The organisation is also proud to be working in the region where these opportunities are being provided to technology service providers by the authorities who are so futuristic in the services being provided to citizens and residents.

What are your plans for the ME region, going forward?

Data protection is a primary focus across the whole spectrum of both public as well as private sectors and includes education to retail, finance to oil and gas, as well as a host of other industries. So, while it is evident that IT plays a significant role in day-to-day operations, data protection is very crucial.

With complexity around protection, Cloud Box Technologies is developing its strengths around MDR, a fledgling service. Additionally, the is also formalising its efforts in making some announcements in the Cloud domain shortly. Both these services will enable the company to provide an unparalleled customer experience. 



CLOUD BOX TECHNOLOGIES IS KEEN ON STRENGTHENING ITS MDR SERVICE ALONG WITH A GLOBAL VENDOR AS A NEW SERVICE OFFERING IN THE REGION.

VEEAM PROMOTES MOHAMAD RIZK TO REGIONAL HEAD FOR ME & CIS

Veeam Software, the leader in backup, recovery and data management solutions that deliver Modern Data Protection, has announced the appointment of Mohamad Rizk as Regional Director for the Middle East and CIS region. In this new role, which plays to his strengths as a leader with a strong business acumen, Rizk will support Veeam's continued investment and strong presence in the region and will look to grow the company's market share and revenues through the planning and execution of sales and channel strategies.

Rizk has had an illustrious career with a strong technical sales background and 14 years of experience, helping regional enterprises with their digital transformation journeys through the rollout of technologies, primarily relating to virtualisation, storage, and data management and protection. He joined Veeam as a Presales Consultant in 2013 based in Saudi Arabia and moved up to his last role of Senior Director, Technical Sales – Middle East, Russia & CIS where he was instrumental in the planning and execution of several large-scale projects that helped drive Veeam's reputation as an industry leader in the Modern Data Protection domain.


Commenting on the appointment, Vasily Vaganov, Regional Vice President, North Eastern EMEA and Middle East at Veeam says, "Mohamad is an experienced manager and one of the corner stones of Veeam's success in the Middle East, which we see as a strategic market. There are many large



RIZK HAS HAD AN ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER, WITH A STRONG TECHNICAL SALES BACKGROUND AND 14 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE INDUSTRY.

projects in the region that have been fulfilled under his management. We've seen steady double-digit growth for many consecutive years in line with rising adoption of our technologies as Middle East companies aim to manage, protect and derive maximum value from their most prized asset – data. I have no doubts Mohamad's holistic business acumen and special expertise in Enterprise IT will help drive further growth and strengthen our leadership position addressing Modern Data Protection needs for Cloud, Virtual, Physical, SaaS and Kubernetes workloads."

"During the last couple of years, digital transformation initiatives have accelerated in response to the need to support a hybrid workplace. Cloud, virtualisation, Kubernetes and SaaS have seen rapidly growing adoption by enterprises who seek to bring flexibility, scalability, simplicity and cost benefits into their IT infrastructures by moving away from legacy data centre architectures. Against this backdrop, I am delighted to be taking on this new role and continuing my journey with Veeam at an exciting time when the company is leading innovation in the area of Modern Data Protection across all environments. Our company's value proposition is simple - by guaranteeing the availability and security of data, businesses have greater control and can make better business decisions to fulfil Digital Transformation initiatives. I look forward to leading Veeam's next phase of growth in the region," says Mohamad Rizk.

Rizk is based in Dubai since 2017 and holds a Masters' degree in Computer Science from Lebanese American University (LAU) where he also worked as teaching and research assistant and co-authored multiple scientific publications in reputable journals. Prior to Veeam, Rizk was Solution Architect at Nesma Advanced Technology, leading the digital transformation projects for the largest organisations in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, during his professional career, he has covered and worked with multiple regions that includes the US, Africa, Middle East, Russia and CIS. 



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THE WINNING FORMULA

Loubna Imenchal, Head of Enterprise Business at Logitech AMECA, tells Anita Joseph in an exclusive interview why the channel ecosystem is vital for the company's success and how Logitech is equipping its partners to cope with the rapidly changing technology landscape.

How important is the channel ecosystem for Logitech in the region?

Logitech believes that when we work together, we do business better. In fact, Logitech's go-to-market approach for video collaboration and professional work solutions is built on partnerships. Our partner community delivers the value and support our customers want. To be more specific regarding the UAE, Logitech counts more than 100 tier-1 partners, distributors, and solution integrators in the Middle East. Together with our market-leading solutions, these key partners enabled Logitech to achieve rapid growth in its video collaboration business.

We held the Logitech Video Collaboration Summit 2022 in Dubai earlier this year, and it was a huge success. Within the context of the conference, we had the chance to outline our channel strategy in the region, showcase Logitech's latest solutions, exchange best practices, and celebrate recent accomplishments with our channel partners. The Logitech channel ecosystem, as you can see, is a key pillar of our strategy and success in the region.

Tell us about Logitech's partner ecosystem. What are the highlights of being a Logitech partner?

Channel partnerships have long been a key part of the technology sector. Logitech gives our valued channel partners all the indeterminate and assistance they need to grow along with us. We also know that partnering works best when it is simple. As a result, we

are committed to being easy to work with while also delivering tools and solutions to help our partners stand out.

One thing that can be said with absolute certainty is that customer demands have rapidly intensified over the last several years, and partners should adopt an ecosystem approach to doing business in order to remain relevant.

The Logitech Channel Partner Program has been carefully developed to provide our partners with several advantages without the hassle and complexities seen in comparable schemes. The program utilizes a tier-based structure with progressively higher levels of rewards, incentives, and perks. Logitech partners get access to the Logitech Partner Portal, which includes sales tools, marketing materials, and training.

Meanwhile, for higher tier partnerships, we offer co-marketing funding, inclusion in the Logitech Partner Locator on our websites, and access to the Lead Distribution Program and Logitech marketing team. However, channel partnerships, like most business relationships, rely on the interpersonal dynamics between the parties. We have a dedicated Logitech Channel Account Manager who supports and works with our partners to engage end customers.



LOGITECH GIVES OUR VALUED CHANNEL PARTNERS ALL THE INDETERMINATE AND ASSISTANCE THEY NEED TO GROW ALONG WITH US.

AS TECHNOLOGY CONTINUES TO RESHAPE WORK, LOGITECH TOGETHER WITH OUR PARTNERS ARE UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO HELP ADDRESS EMERGING AND EVOLVING HYBRID WORK TRENDS.

With digital transformation accelerating at breakneck speed, how is Logitech equipping its partners to cope up with the changing technological demands?

As technology continues to reshape work, Logitech together with our partners are uniquely positioned to help address emerging and evolving hybrid work trends. Raising the bar on meeting room and personal workspace solutions and optimising collaboration for the hybrid worker, our products have become a hallmark for frictionless user experiences and scalable deployments for every meeting space.

The acceleration of digital transformation, in part due to the recent pandemic, changed the way we work dramatically. Work is no longer defined by a single place. It may or may not take place in an office. Work happens wherever people are, and Logitech supports hybrid work by providing video collaboration solutions that offer cutting-edge meeting experiences for everyone regardless of location. In reality, our solutions are our partners' most valuable asset.





VIDEO MEETINGS THAT RAISE THE BAR

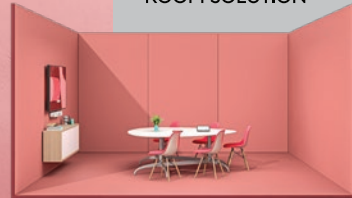
Introducing Logitech Rally Family



**RALLY
BAR MINI**



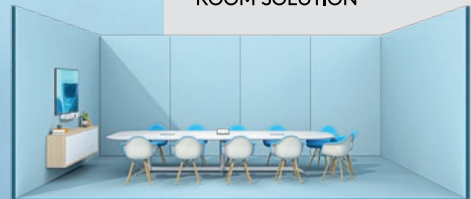
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ROOM SOLUTION**



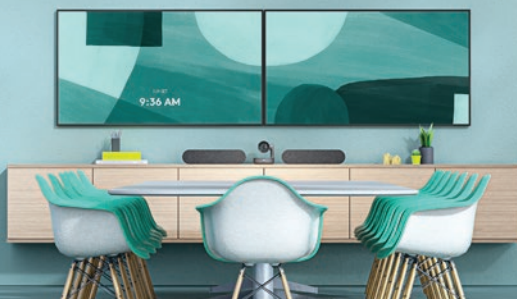
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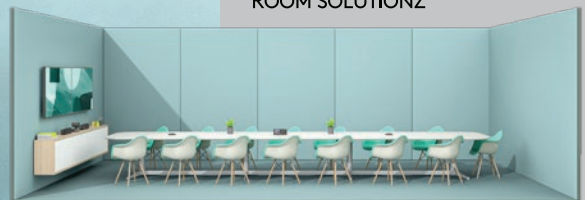
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For example, Logitech's video conferencing solutions are built around a comprehensive ecosystem of hardware, software, services, and world-class partnerships. Our products and solutions are tested and certified to ensure compatibility with the world's leading video conferencing platforms. One reason indeterminate employ Logitech devices in their meeting rooms is the sophistication of our video and AI technologies. Logitech video collaboration solutions are reliable, easy to set up and manage, and straightforward to use. They encourage meeting equity and equal participation by allowing everyone to be seen and heard clearly.

The way we work with partners has also evolved. Logitech is also making it easy for its partners to do business with us with digital solutions, online trainings, self-service marketing portal, and the partner portal to access Logitech's online resources and tools.



LOGITECH WILL PROVIDE THE MARKET WITH NEEDED VIDEO COLLABORATION TOOLS TO SUPPORT EMPLOYEES THAT ARE TRANSITIONING BETWEEN OFFICE AND HOME-OFFICE SEAMLESSLY.

Logitech is experiencing rapid adoption of video collaboration in the Middle East, even as hybrid working models remain popular. How much have your channel partners contributed to this success?

Despite the fact that Logitech has the most extensive range of video conferencing and collaboration solutions, this alone would not be enough to ensure success. Our

channel partners reach more customers with their wide network, and that contributed significantly to Logitech's local achievements. In today's highly competitive business climate, maintaining and growing a brand's market share is a difficult feat. However, our regional partners helped us achieve the full scalability of our products and services.

With Logitech's support and training, our channel partners are



able to provide end-customers in the UAE highly personalised solutions, tailored to their business needs. We are discussing an operational model that is enabled by partners and centered on the customer. Because of Logitech's swift adaptability to ever-changing business needs, our partners can effectively convert their clients' desires into reality.

Furthermore, we always take into account that our channel partner community has the most direct contact with Logitech's end customers. As a result, we leverage the gathered input from their regular and dynamic interactions with customers to further improve our solutions and create outstanding end-user experiences that benefit all parties involved.

Additionally, Logitech's channel partners play a crucial role in supporting and amplifying our marketing efforts and reach. Our channel partners in the UAE have an in-depth understanding of the local market. In conjunction with our support and coaching, they perform effective offline and online marketing initiatives. Partner marketing contributes to stimulating customer interest, generates leads, and, ultimately, drives sales.

Tell us about Logitech's latest range of products and services.

Logitech has been a company focused on innovation and quality since its establishment in 1981 in Lausanne, Switzerland. So, although we now provide a diverse variety of products and services that can meet the demands of any business, even in volatile times, our product design teams are restless, and new product releases are planned for this fall.

The new Logitech Brio 505 is one of them. We are talking about a next-generation web camera, offering superior video quality. Logitech's exclusive HDR technology automatically corrects the light in real-time.

The Logitech Zone Vibe Wireless headset is another notable release. Certified for Google Meet, Google Voice, and Zoom and compatible with major video platforms such

as Microsoft Teams, Zone Vibe Wireless makes joining any meeting simple and easy. The new, lightweight headset provides up to 20 hours of real wireless freedom and may connect to users' devices through Bluetooth and the accompanying USB receiver.

Logitech also has software and apps to help customers easily manage and optimise their video tools and devices. At the enterprise level, Logitech Sync is a cloud-based remote device management software that allows enterprise IT to maintain, manage, and regularly update their video collaboration implementation from any location. IT teams are able to ensure their Logitech video collaboration devices and tools are healthy and up to date even remotely. While Logi Tune is equivalent to a video meeting "maestro" because it enables

end users to control their video meeting experience wherever they are: at home, in the office, or on the go. Webcam and headset settings are all at users' fingertips to ensure they look and sound the way they want in video meetings.

The Logitech Brio 505 and Zone Vibe Wireless are compatible with Logitech Sync and Logi Tune Desktop.

Of course, more exciting Logitech video conferencing and collaboration products are on the horizon, but we would rather not give anything away just yet.

What are Logitech's plans for this region?

We are witnessing an increase in the adoption for video collaboration as a result of the hybrid work trend and rapid digitisation that is driving hyper-connectivity through advanced video conferencing tools and devices. Logitech will provide the market with needed video collaboration tools to support employees that are transitioning between office and home-office seamlessly. We will work with our partners to create deeper integrations. Our co-selling strategy Logitech training programs, marketing and sales enablement tools to help partners grow. We plan to promote our products in the coming year, to drive the usage of video collaboration solutions and devices across the region, while we help organisations adopt our video collaboration tools. We will also focus on talent building which is also essential to bridge the gap in the unprecedented digital skills gap as more jobs demand digital skills. It is also worth mentioning that Logitech provides industry-specific solutions for the Healthcare, Government, and Education industries, and this is another significant benefit for our channel partners. As a consequence, not only are they able to keep up with changing technology demands, but they also have amazing development potential. 



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THEIR BUSINESS
NEEDS.**

CHALLENGES FACED BY SYSTEMS INTEGRATORS POST COVID

Osama Qadan, Technology panelist at CPI, on how the COVID era has presented a new environment for System Integrators.

System Integrators have been the catalyst driving the digital transformation initiatives in our region over the past three decades. They have adapted their business models and expertise over the years to fulfill a growing number of projects with technologies as diverse as the countries they operate in. System integrators work in a continuous mode of techno-commercial operational activities to fulfill the promises and commitments made during their sales cycles. That's the nature of the business and the successful ones have perfected this over the years.

The COVID era has presented a new environment for System Integrators. This era is marked by a clear push by governments and enterprises to adopt digital as a standard method of doing business. Many technology companies coupled with their channel partners have pushed forward to comply with the direction of their clients and the explosion of FinTech services is the clearest example of the success in this field. Governments and customer-facing businesses had to change their operating models to allow clients to do what they used to do and even more with little or no human interaction. To many companies, the COVID era presented an opportunity to grow and expand into new business lines to cope with these new requirements.

However, there is another side to this coin. System Integrators have suffered during the COVID era with a number of challenges that have persisted even after the decline in the impacts of the COVID period. These challenges cast a long shadow on the profitability of these companies and can risk their sustainability over the long term.

Global shortage of chips: regardless



of the reasons for the chip shortage phenomenon, technology vendors have been hit for the first time ever by the reality that their equipment are not manufacturable anymore. Lead times for standard and regularly ordered equipment running in the months (or even more) is now a common response by most vendors. This presents a challenge to System Integrators that their designs are not implementable anymore. Substitute models are now mandatory either from the same vendor or from other vendors. Sacrifices in performance and functionality are normal byproducts and there's no way around it.


Volatility of prices: supply and demand is now part of the technology supply chain landscape. What we used to hear about in the commodity business has become part of our tech industry that has fought for so long

to be different and niche. System Integrators face the reality that their price proposals are outdated by the time they get awarded. Arguing with vendors to stabilise prices given the chip shortage and long lead times is an experience that many of us are now facing on daily basis and surely no one is enjoying it.

Long lead times to deliver equipment: in addition to the above reasons, logistical lines have been plagued with over stocking in ports and airports and clearing this backlog is a process that will take time. Customers have to adapt that their projects will no longer finish on time for reasons that are beyond the control of their suppliers. Nonetheless, no one can argue that this comes with frustration and anger in some cases. However, little can be done here for the foreseeable future.

Cost of money: global federal reserve banks have resorted to the tactic of increasing interest rates as a way to combat inflation. This means that system integrators relying on banks to finance their businesses are faced with the fact that their bottomline on projects will suffer. This problem gets compounded, of course, with the project plans running over budget.

Overhead cost over-runs: this is where the CFO's come into play. Salaries and rents continue to be a requirement that need to be paid on time to sustain the business. However, when a project takes twice or more time to get implemented, staff have to stay longer on the bench before they are called upon to implement and project managers to raise invoices to clients. The overhead becomes a sizable budget line item that will only show its ugly head at the end of the year when all is said and done.

All of the above factors demand that clients and their long-term partners have to work closely together to weather this storm. Flexible payment terms and more room for price negotiations are important not for system integrators to make more money but rather to survive. Ultimately, the ecosystem will survive this crisis but some casualties will result. Hopefully, survivors will outnumber the casualties. Let's keep our fingers crossed. 

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SMBS & DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION



Mohamed Sabra, SMB Lead, Middle East & Africa at Cisco, tells Anita Joseph how small & medium-sized businesses can successfully navigate the nuances of hybrid work.

What has been the magnitude of the impact of hybrid work in driving SMB digital transformation?

A global pandemic wasn't part of anyone's business plan. As it turns out, however, many small and medium-sized businesses have been uniquely up to the task, rapidly adopting new processes and technologies.

One successful adaptation by SMBs will persist long after the pandemic: the broad acceptance of remote work. To adapt, SMBs did what they do best: finding solutions that simplify their increasingly complex business operations. SMBs now have a heightened awareness of their need to modernise IT, according to market research firm Techaisle research, in the latest edition of SMB dynamo, a new quarterly Cisco ebook that in its latest edition explores the trend toward hybrid work.

In fact, Techaisle research reveals that collaboration is now ranked as a top priority by 96% of SMBs — enabling remote and hybrid work will



act as the foundation for the further evolution of workplace models. Now a growing number of organisations are implementing formal structure and tools to enable what's known as hybrid work, a seamless blend of in-person office settings with remote work that drives higher productivity and increased employee satisfaction.

SMBs have a well-earned reputation for doing a lot with relatively little, by getting the most out of every resource they have. What are some of the advanced features of Cisco WebEx that can help SMB's simply hybrid work?

Choosing the right collaboration solution is one of the most important decisions SMBs need to make as they adopt a hybrid work model.

With Webex, you are getting the intelligence that only AI-powered features can deliver, like your own meeting assistant to take notes, attendee insights, and facial recognition.

Designed to scale and grow with you, Webex offers a full suite of collaboration solutions that work with the tools you use every day, enabling you and your teams to be more productive anytime, anyplace.

Only with Webex do you have full end-to-end encryption. When you need to collaborate with others through video, audio, screen sharing or messaging, we help you stay protected.

It has been a widely unknown fact that the Middle East has also been facing a 'cyber pandemic' since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic with 250% increase in cyberattacks in some countries across the region. What are some of the essential strategies that SMBs can adopt to fortify security for hybrid work?

Defending organisations against cyber threats is tough for any business, regardless of size. But it's particularly true for SMBs because their resources are typically limited, and they must be laser focused on only making investments that will bring impactful

results. The stakes are higher and prioritising what's most important is critical for success.

Some tips for SMBs to prioritise cybersecurity:

- **Start with people.** You need to make sure that the people who access your systems are who they say they are. Protect your sensitive data by verifying the identity of users, devices, and applications with secure two-factor authentication.
- **Look at connections.** People access your network in multiple ways. If you have a mobile or remote workforce, they may be connecting from an office, a home laptop, or a mobile device. Detect and block malware and viruses across employee devices with endpoint protection.
- **Pay attention to email.** If you have people, you have email. Every day, people inadvertently click malicious link or open harmful email attachments that download malware. Block malware delivered through spam and phishing emails.

- **Don't let malware spread.**

If malware gets in, it spreads across your network, and can encrypt your files or take down critical systems. The Internet and networks don't work without the Domain Name System (DNS) to route data, and neither does most ransomware. Defend your network. Block requests to sites that host malware with cloud-delivered security. In the latest quarterly report of Cisco Talos, one of the world's largest private threat intelligence teams, commodity malware outpaced ransomware. According to the report, during the period from April to June 2022, malware was comprising 20% of the threats observed, followed by ransomware.

- **Cisco security solutions** work together and are backed by Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning that can identify emerging threats. We've invested heavily in developing our security tools, and today SMBs can benefit from the same security technology that powers the world's largest, most complex enterprises. 



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Danish Siddiqui, Assistant Vice President – Digital Banking, tells Anita Joseph, Editor, Reseller ME, all about Raqmiyat's digital banking portfolio and how the concept of open banking is catching on in the region.



BANKING DIGITALLY

Tell us about **Raqmiyat's digital banking portfolio.** Our Financial Portfolio focuses on scalable technology with products of front- to-back office, from accounting, and compliance to communication and from retail banking to SME business, we have a solution to automate every channel or back-office operations. Modern channel banking products like Omni Channel including ATM CX enhancement, CRM, Orchestration Engine, AI bots, Financial Marketplace, Open Banking / Open API, Digital Onboarding, Blockchain, and other Nascent Technologies. For the SME business, we have corporate onboarding, Digital lending, and Investment Banking products. For the back-office operations, we have comprehensive Data Aggregation and Analytics tools to enhance overall CX Enhancement, financial middleware, Enterprise

Switch, and Core Banking. With our partners, we have created an ecosystem of products to offer a Turn-key offering for Modern Banking needs.

How is the financial sector in the region evolving, particularly post the pandemic?

Post-Pandemic, the future is moving towards the adaptation of Digital Only Banks, Challenger Banks, Standalone Financial Institutions or NBFCs with services like Digital Lending, independent Financial Marketplaces, and Payment Aggregation Services, which are disrupting the financial industry with Instant P2P Payments, BNPL solutions, Crypto Wallets, and FinTech offering Banking as a Service (BAAS) and Payment Hub services as (PAAS).

Tell us more about the concept of open banking and how it is catching up in the region.

Banking Data is becoming a commodity and the real value comes from adding the financial data. Open Banking is giving Banks and others a range of other companies enabling their customers to choose from a data-driven, customer-centric, and frictionless service. Financial institutions can onboard open banking either by creating their marketplace through a platform or by joining an existing ecosystem. Regulators also play an important role in embarrassing this change as Open data or data sharing policies must be driven from the central institutions. This region has already undergone mandates from central authorities for the adoption of Open Banking for retail banks. Open Banking has also affected the Fintech startups in the region and a new category of fintech called NBFC (Non-Banking Financial Institutions) are in disrupting the BFSI sector. An example could be Regional Payment Hubs initiatives which become a necessity during and post-pandemic and many NBFCs have been able to serve many countries across the region. It's not long when a region-wide drive will be witnessed for Open Finance and Open Data considering that the Middle East could very well be the World's next fintech Hotspot.

There is an increased focus now on the customer and putting customer needs first, particularly in the financial sector. How has this impacted the delivery of services and solutions?

Customers have evolved from individuals who only thought mass eCommerce platforms like Amazon could offer choices to NBFCs and Neo Banks who offer Financial Marketplace with the option to opt for a service to banked or even unbanked customers. With this sort of customer-centric evolution, a solution that banks and financial institutions opted for was cloud-native applications which are highly resilient, observable, manageable, and features a shorter application lifecycle. This enables them to promote business responsiveness and readiness for change.

The financial services sector is perhaps the fastest digitally transforming sector, not just in the region, but all over the world. What are some of the challenges faced by the sector in this journey?

Even though the Banking sector has evolved, financial institutions that have created a digital strategy are creating separate entities or subsidiaries to promote their digital-only approach. The challenges that digital disruption is facing include factors like Upfront investments, changing compliance policies, adoption of new customer channels, investing in training, and ambiguity of current technology suddenly turning obsolete. Due to the disruption of new players in the market which are NBFCs, traditional financial institutions are moving towards a strategy to focus on customer experience while redefining the role of their existing physical branches. One of the most important elements of growth is the openness to innovation and its adaptation. The combination of efforts from the Internal IT department, and the right technology partner can help create products that are necessary and relevant to customers. Still, the above factor cannot guarantee digitalisation success. 



EVEN THOUGH THE BANKING SECTOR HAS EVOLVED, FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS THAT HAVE CREATED A DIGITAL STRATEGY ARE CREATING SEPARATE ENTITIES OR SUBSIDIARIES TO PROMOTE THEIR DIGITAL-ONLY APPROACH.

KYNDRYL ACHIEVES CISCO GLOBAL GOLD INTEGRATOR CERTIFICATION



This partner status enables Kyndryl to receive Gold-level benefits and incentives and assures customers that Kyndryl's expert resources and skilled practitioners are available in geographies supported by Cisco.

Kyndryl, the world's largest IT infrastructure services provider, has announced that it has achieved Cisco Global Gold Integrator status, the highest level available and a recognition of Kyndryl's ability to deliver and support advanced solutions for joint customers around the world.

This partner status enables Kyndryl to receive Gold-level benefits and incentives and assures customers that Kyndryl's expert resources and skilled practitioners are available in geographies supported by Cisco. The Global Gold status also is recognition of Kyndryl's ability to sell, deliver and support Cisco solutions worldwide and to showcase Cisco Solutions to customers at global Cisco Experience Centers.

To become a Cisco Global Gold partner, Kyndryl's engineers, architects and sales teams have demonstrated significant knowledge and expertise across a broad portfolio of Cisco technology, software, and services. To reach this level, Kyndryl also has demonstrated its ability to meet Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and metrics around Cisco performance thresholds, global, regional, and local competencies, support centers and solutions, hybrid IT offerings, and customer satisfaction.

Kyndryl and Cisco recently announced a partnership to help customers design, build, manage and modernise mission-critical systems. The companies are developing private cloud services, network and edge computing and

software defined networking (SDN) solutions and multi-network wide area network (WAN) offerings to enable digital modernisation and cloud acceleration via differentiated on-premises or edge solutions, and fully managed end-to-end cloud services.

"As we expand our relationship with Cisco, we are excited to reach the Global Gold Partner status, which validates and extends our ability to collaborate at scale and deliver the highest level of joint support and benefits to global customers," said Jeff Gatz, Director, Global Cisco Alliance at Kyndryl. "By demonstrating a level of excellence in providing managed services backed by Cisco Powered Solutions, Kyndryl can better ensure its ability to deliver best of breed 5G networking solutions and other innovative solutions that meet customer needs and requirements."

"We are delighted that Kyndryl has joined a very select group of Cisco partners who have invested in and achieved Global Gold status. To accomplish this status in the short period of time that Kyndryl has existed requires extraordinary dedication," said Nick Holden, VP, Cisco Global Strategic Partners and Co-sell. "We appreciate their partnership investment in Cisco and are excited about growing our joint business together in critical global markets and architectures as well as innovating in new business models and solutions." 



KYNDRYL AND CISCO RECENTLY ANNOUNCED A PARTNERSHIP TO HELP CUSTOMERS DESIGN, BUILD, MANAGE AND MODERNISE MISSION-CRITICAL SYSTEMS.

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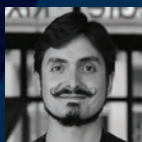
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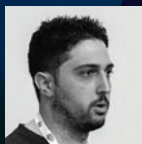
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THE NEW MARKETPLACE

Mona Faraj, founder of Insight Out, co-founder of exploretech.io and Managing Director of HSMAI ME, tells Reseller ME all about Exploretech and how it provides the perfect platform for channel industry professionals to find and compare the tech solutions that they need, and receive subject matter expert advice to improve their businesses.

How was the idea of exploretech born? During 2020 businesses were being forced to adapt to different technologies, add new revenue streams and manage more for less. When it comes to technology, The decision-making processes are very complex, often involving decision makers who do not come from a technology background. Investing in tech and choosing the right solutions and providers should be a thorough and well-studied decision that required the right skill sets and this is not always the case. With all this in mind, we wanted to create a real solution to help both the Hospitality and Travel industry better navigate, explore, choose, communicate & select through a single go-to platform.

Can you tell us more about the platform and how it will benefit the travel and hospitality industry?

Industry professionals will have one go-to source to find and compare the tech solutions that they need, and receive subject matter expert advice to improve their businesses.

The hotel & travel industry are missing out on innovative solutions

which could hugely benefit their businesses due to the sheer volume of information shared and the many providers that may not have an active footprint in the MEA region. The way in which this information is presented makes it extremely difficult for businesses to follow, explore and verify the exact nature of the solutions they need.

Additionally, being able to automate the vendor / product comparison and the very complex RFI/RFP process, that today is an advantage to those that can afford it, would open a totally different arena to both the buyers and vendors.

This is where ExploreTECH comes in. By creating a new kind of marketplace, we create a Blue Ocean opportunity for these two parties to come together within a new arena and transform the industry.

Digital-first is the need of the hour post -pandemic. What is your take on the same?

As with any other industry, Hospitality and Travel must continue to innovate in order to stay relevant in the modern world. The pandemic has only accelerated this urgency of this inevitable need and pushed technology to the forefront of business

management. The hospitality and Travel industry where impacted the most and have lost many of its talented executives to other industries and that's a fact globally and whilst our region may have more advantages in attracting & retaining talent, shortage is still a fact. Deploying automation and digital transformation means one can manage more with less and better use resources and expertise.

With companies undergoing digital transformation, what do you think will be the new challenges they have to face in a digital ecosystem?

Today, users and decision makers are struggling with knowledge and resources to discover all required solutions to really optimise their businesses. They rely on legacy knowledge, "comfort zones" and infrastructure which halts innovation and new technology adoption in the industry. Then comes the users challenges and how to optimise on the investment made and ensure maximum utilisation of tech stack deployed. Knowledge gap and the speed of adoption of solutions is among the main challenges that can be faced.

Digital transformation is used by everyone these days and it means



BEING ABLE TO AUTOMATE THE VENDOR / PRODUCT COMPARISON AND THE VERY COMPLEX RFI/RFP PROCESS, THAT TODAY IS AN ADVANTAGE TO THOSE THAT CAN AFFORD IT, WOULD OPEN A TOTALLY DIFFERENT ARENA TO BOTH THE BUYERS AND VENDORS.

different things to different people and is not always a complex structure. Any use of tech to support people and processes be more efficient is for me a form of transformation.

The COVID-19 crisis has brought about years of change in the way companies in all sectors and regions do business and to stay competitive in this new business and economic environment, we require new strategies and practices. According to a new McKinsey Global Survey of executives, their companies have accelerated the digitisation of their customer and supply-chain interactions and of their internal operations by three to four years.


What disruptive technology do you see taking form in the coming years in this market?

Disruptive Technology can also take many forms, including product and service innovations, as well as changes to operating processes and business models. What they all have in common is a commitment to continuous improvement and growth. The goal is to always be on the lookout for new and better ways to serve the customer and lead the market.

That commitment is an immense advantage in the hospitality industry, especially now. Our customers need us more than ever. Our businesses also need to quickly adapt to this changing business landscape.

Robotics in hospitality, AI, virtual/augmented reality, IoT, blockchain technology, and e-commerce are some of the disruptive technologies significantly influencing the future. I am not the expert there, but I believe these technologies are simply what is expected.

Which technology do you foresee being widely adapted in 2022?

Cloud Services, AI, contactless solutions. Systems such as chatbots for web support, virtual assistants like Google Home or Apple Siri, and tracking the estimated time of arrival of online food orders helps answer questions, take requests, and make lives easier and more efficient. 

BOSE INTRODUCES QUIETCOMFORT EARBUDS II



Bose has announced its next generation of truly wireless noise cancelling earbuds — the Bose QuietComfort Earbuds II. With Bose CustomTune™ sound calibration technology, QC Earbuds II intelligently personalise audio and noise cancellation performance to the unique shape of every ear — resulting in an unprecedented listening experience and the world's best noise cancellation from any headphone — banded or in-ear.

The QuietComfort Earbuds II have an all-new design. Each bud is about one-third smaller than its predecessor, weighs just 6 grams, and they come in a pocketable charging case. And for further personalisation, they also include an eartip Fit Kit featuring a new two-piece system with interchangeable stability bands and eartips — delivering the all-day comfort and wearability the QuietComfort name is known for. The Bose QuietComfort Earbuds II will be available in Triple Black starting on September 29th for AED



1,199, and pre-orders in the UAE begin from September 8th at Bose stores and select resellers in the UAE. A Soapstone color variant will also be available later this year.

For audio, CustomTune fully optimises the sound frequency profile to the unique properties of every ear, so the sound that reaches the eardrum is just as the artist intended — lifelike, balanced audio with nuance, clarity, and depth. For more powerful noise cancellation, CustomTune also calibrates the noise reduction signal to your ears, enabling a significant

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IS JUST AS
THE ARTIST
INTENDED.**

performance improvement. It targets frequencies that were previously difficult to reduce — like voices of nearby coworkers, screaming babies on the bus, or family distractions in your

home office — so now they fade away without you ever knowing they were there. And CustomTune continuously adapts to changing noise in your environment, ensuring the best level of noise cancellation is maintained.

The intelligent personalisation provided by CustomTune also enhances Aware Mode with ActiveSense. In Aware Mode, it delivers improved transparency allowing your surroundings to pass through the earbuds sounding as natural and lifelike as possible. And when loud disruptions happen nearby, ActiveSense responds with just the right level of noise cancellation — tuned specifically to your ear — to reduce noise as it happens, and only for as long as it lasts.

The QC Earbuds II use four microphones in each bud — one on the inside and three on the outside — to sense, measure, and send unwanted noise to a proprietary electronic chip loaded with an exclusive algorithm. Together with tiny transducers, the system responds with a precise, equal, and opposite signal in less than a fraction of a millisecond. The result is dramatic and exclusive to Bose.

The revolutionary advancement in noise cancellation technology provided by the QuietComfort Earbuds II starts with ensuring an optimal fit to your ears. The QC Earbuds II separate the traditional single-piece eartip into a two-piece system: a stability band which hugs the contour of your ear, and an umbrella-shaped silicone eartip to create a firm seal at your ear's opening.

A Bose Fit Kit included with the QC Earbuds II supplies three sizes of eartips and three sizes of stability bands — allowing for up to nine customisation options for each bud. And, because no two ears are the same — even on the same person — all of the pieces are designed to be interchangeable, so you find a fit that feels comfortable and stays in place all day. Advanced materials and manufacturing techniques keep the stability bands and eartips soft and compliant, yet durable and easy to change.

The new Bose QuietComfort Earbuds II are compatible with both Apple and Android devices. 

FIRMS FACE HEFTY BILLS FOLLOWING POST-COVID DATA STORAGE SURGE: VERITAS

Veritas Technologies, a leader in multi-cloud data management, is warning that businesses are facing a cost crisis for collaborative working tools as post-COVID working practices begin to catch up with them.

The use of cloud collaboration services, such as Microsoft SharePoint (the storage and sharing platform used by Office 365 and Microsoft Teams), rapidly accelerated at the start of the pandemic. Yet, with very few providers of collaboration tools offering options to archive files, many businesses are finding that their data volumes and cost overruns are now ballooning out of control. If left unaddressed, those businesses will find themselves paying the high price of 'storage overages' for data that they're no longer using and should have archived.

As businesses grapple with rising energy costs, supply chain issues, and labour shortages, a sudden step up in cloud storage costs is the last thing they need. Businesses can get ahead of the issue by adopting third-party solutions to automatically archive legacy data from cloud services, but few are aware of this.

Johnny Karam, Managing Director & Vice President of International Emerging Region at Veritas Technologies, explains: "Businesses in the UAE and around the world quickly embraced hybrid working and cloud collaboration tools during the pandemic to keep their employees working productively. As a result, by the end of 2020, the number of



Johnny Karam

SharePoint accounts shot up to over 200 million globally. Today, much of the data created at the outbreak of the pandemic would have been archived if it were stored on an organisation's own servers, however many cloud collaboration tools, including SharePoint, lack a native archive function, and the data is all stacking up in 'hot' expensive storage. This means that some companies are paying to keep every Teams chat from every employee from two years ago on the most expensive tier of storage."

'Hot' storage refers to storage media that offers fast and easy

access to data, typically based on premium hardware with highly optimised connectivity. Its counterpart, cold storage, often uses cheaper media which allow data to be stored for compliance purposes, where it is typically kept online or offline, and rarely accessed.

Johnny Karam continues: "Collaboration solutions, like SharePoint and Teams, have helped businesses in the UAE to continue remote working effectively and efficiently. No business, small or large, would want to see costs prevent them from continuing to use these collaboration tools. In order to safeguard themselves against soaring costs due to and inflated amount of unarchived, and unorganised data, businesses must consider using a third-party solution to move unused data to cold storage, whilst keeping it searchable and accessible to the business."

Cloud data management tools, like Veritas' NetBackup SaaS Protection, can simply move archive-ready data to more cost-effective storage tiers, often on the same cloud platform that businesses are already using for their hot data, and without compromising data privacy and sovereignty requirements.

Johnny said, "We estimate that storage could be as much as 22 times cheaper for businesses that move from paying for extra capacity in SharePoint, to archiving their data to more affordable storage tiers*."

**Based on a typical price of \$153 (AED 561.97) per TB per month for SharePoint overages compared to the quoted cost of \$676 (AED 2482.94) for 100TB of Azure Storage 3-year Reserved Capacity in a cool tier.*

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